

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)	Criminal No. 20-cr-10099
)	
v.)	Violation:
)	
PETER DAMERIS,)	<u>Count One</u> : Conspiracy to Commit Mail
)	Fraud and Honest Services Mail Fraud
Defendant)	(18 U.S.C. § 1349)
)	

INFORMATION

At all times relevant to this Information:

General Allegations

1. Defendant PETER DAMERIS (“DAMERIS”) was a resident of Los Angeles, California.
2. The Edge College & Career Network, LLC, also known as “The Key,” was a for-profit college counseling and preparation business based in Newport Beach, California that was established in or about 2007 and registered in California in or about 2012.
3. The Key Worldwide Foundation (“KWF”) was a non-profit corporation founded in or about 2012 and based in Newport Beach, California. In or about 2013, the Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) approved KWF as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, meaning that KWF was exempt from paying federal income tax, and that individuals who contributed to KWF could deduct those contributions from their taxable income, subject to certain limitations.
4. William “Rick” Singer was a resident, variously, of Sacramento and Newport Beach, California. Singer founded and, together with others, operated The Key and KWF.

5. Georgetown University (“Georgetown”) was a highly selective private university located in Washington, D.C.

6. Gordon Ernst (“Ernst”) was a resident of Chevy Chase, Maryland and Falmouth, Massachusetts. Until January 2018, Ernst was employed as the head coach of men’s and women’s tennis at Georgetown.

Background on the College Admissions Process

7. The athletic teams of Georgetown compete in most sports at the Division I level, the highest level of intercollegiate athletics sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (“NCAA”).

8. Many selective colleges and universities in the United States, including Georgetown, recruit students with demonstrated athletic abilities, and typically apply different criteria when evaluating applications from such students, with the expectation that recruited athletes will be contributing members of Georgetown’s athletic teams once enrolled. Typically, the Georgetown admissions office allots a set number of spots in the incoming class to each head coach of a varsity sport for that coach’s recruited athletes. The admissions prospects of recruited athletes are higher than those of non-recruited athletes with similar grades and standardized test scores.

9. As employees of the university, Georgetown athletic coaches owe a duty of honest services to the university.

10. Admission to Georgetown, the determination of which students to admit, and the resulting composition of undergraduate classes are all important assets of the university.

The Conspiracy

11. Beginning in or about 2015 and continuing through at least the fall of 2016, DAMERIS conspired with Singer, Ernst and others known and unknown to the United States Attorney to use bribery and other forms of fraud to facilitate the admission of DAMERIS's son to Georgetown.

Objects and Purpose of the Conspiracy

12. The principal objects and purposes of the conspiracy were to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1346, by bribing Ernst to designate DAMERIS's son as a purported tennis recruit to facilitate his admission to Georgetown even though he did not play tennis competitively.

Manner and Means of the Conspiracy

13. Among the manner and means by which DAMERIS, Singer, Ernst and others known and unknown to the United States Attorney carried out the conspiracy were the following:

- a. Paying bribes to Ernst in exchange for designating DAMERIS's son as a purported tennis recruit; and,
- b. Designating DAMERIS' son as a purported tennis recruit, without regard for his athletic ability.

Acts in Furtherance of the Conspiracy

14. In or about 2015 and 2016, DAMERIS agreed to pay Singer \$300,000 to bribe Ernst to designate DAMERIS's son as a tennis recruit—despite the fact that he did not play tennis competitively—in order to facilitate his son's admission to Georgetown.

15. On or about May 15, 2015, DAMERIS sent his son's scores on the ACT college entrance exam to Singer, who forwarded them to Ernst.

16. On or about May 21, 2015, DAMERIS sent an e-mail to Singer asking if he had any news on the “walk through” at Georgetown, referring to Ernst’s effort to obtain preliminary approval from the Georgetown admissions office of DAMERIS’ son’s academic credentials as part of Ernst’s recruitment of DAMERIS’s son as a tennis player.

17. In June 2015, Ernst sent a fax to a Georgetown admissions officer containing application information for a number of Georgetown tennis recruits, including DAMERIS’s son.

18. On or about August 21, 2015, Ernst wrote to the same Georgetown admissions officer, stating: “Just to confirm my usage of 3 spots, with 3 then remaining.” All three purported tennis recruits referenced in the e-mail, including DAMERIS’s son, were children of Singer’s clients. None played tennis competitively.

19. In late September 2015, DAMERIS’s son was selected to interview with a Georgetown graduate as part of the university admissions process. On September 28, 2015, Singer wrote to DAMERIS telling him that the interview was a “formality,” but that DAMERIS’s son should spend little or no time discussing crew—a sport in which he actually did participate competitively—during the interview.

20. On or about November 6, 2015, Georgetown sent DAMERIS’s son a letter, by U.S. Mail, noting that “[t]he Committee on Admissions has conducted an initial review of your application to the Class of 2020 at the request of Mr. Gordie Ernst, Tennis Coach” and that “the Committee has ranked your admission as ‘likely.’” The letter explained that candidates rated “likely” have a greater than 95 percent chance of being admitted to Georgetown and that DAMERIS’s son would receive a final decision by April 1, 2016.

21. On or about April 15, 2016, after DAMERIS's son was granted formal admission to Georgetown, DAMERIS directed a \$300,000 payment from a donor-advised gift fund in his name to KWF.

22. Between on or about September 11, 2015 and November 30, 2016, Singer caused KWF to issue multiple payments to Ernst via U.S. Mail.

COUNT ONE
Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud
and Honest Services Mail Fraud
(18 U.S.C. § 1349)

The United States Attorney charges:

23. The United States Attorney re-alleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 22 of this Information.

24. From in or about 2015 through in or about November 2016, in the District of Massachusetts, the Central District of California and elsewhere, the defendant,

PETER DAMERIS,

conspired with William “Rick” Singer, Gordon Ernst, and others known and unknown to the United States Attorney to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud, that is, having devised and intending to devise a scheme and artifice to defraud and to obtain money and property, to wit, admission to Georgetown University, by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, and to defraud and deprive Georgetown of its right to the honest and faithful services of its employee, Gordon Ernst, through bribes and kickbacks, did, for the purpose of executing and attempting to execute the scheme, knowingly cause to be delivered by mail any matter and thing by any private and commercial interstate carrier according to the direction thereon, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1341 and 1346.

All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1349.

ANDREW E. LELLING
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

By:



ERIC S. ROSEN
JUSTIN D. O'CONNELL
KRISTEN A. KEARNEY
LESLIE A. WRIGHT
Assistant United States Attorneys

Date: January 6, 2020